

TEACHING THE OLD DOG...

Remember to test the tester

Consumers hold certain terms sacred: I call them "golden cows." "Tune-ups" still exist in their minds; right or wrong they still come in and ask for them. Checking tire pressure is another request that, while it has not changed in importance, the methods of checking and maintaining have.

Judging by their now daily presence in the shop, tire pressure monitoring (TPM) systems are clearly here to stay. As part of normal service – tire rotation, replacement and so forth – we are constantly involved with these systems. After reviewing the tools available to us to help deal with TPM systems, we realized we needed one that works well and is very user-friendly. Many of these new units are simple tools, and I am amazed at how much they can do – and how it has changed some of the basics.

Last week a customer came in with the low tire-pressure warning light illuminated on his late-model Jeep Liberty. A quick check of tire pressures turned up a slightly low left rear tire by a few pounds but not terribly out of range. Hmm...

Not convinced that the low pressure was the cause, I explained to the customer that there may be more here than meets the eye. We reset the system and advised him to return should the light come on again. The very next morning, I was greeted by the customer and the Jeep.

The Jeep's TPM light was on, and after checking tire pressure I concluded that there was no leak. All tires were still at the same pressure as the day before. The first tool I reached for was the same TPM monitoring tool I had used the day before. I knew from my reading up on the tool that it not only helps perform reset procedures but can also diagnose system issues.

Scrolling through the unit's menu, I found the section I was looking for. "Diagnostics"



Many tire pressure monitoring (TPM) systems are easy to use and offer powerful diagnostic capabilities.

brought up the menu that allowed me to test each valve stem pressure sensor and "see" just what tire pressure it was reporting to the TPM system computer. Quick and easy, within minutes I found that the right front sensor had no output signal. It was a bad sensor. There is a very important lesson here – when servicing tires on a vehicle with a TPM system, it is key to test the system and the sensors before beginning any service.

I also was able to verify that the tire pressure gauge reading was what the computer was being told. In other words, if the gauge reads 35 pounds and the sensor is reporting 30 pounds, one of them is lying and could turn on the light.

The customer was equally impressed as to the way the system was properly tested using our new tool. Even the simplest things on an automobile today are not that simple anymore. Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks? Woof to you and yours!

This tip was contributed by Ron Ananian, "The Car Doctor," Owner, R/A Automotive, Waldwick, NJ, courtesy of OTC, a business unit of SPX Corporation.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

Q. A clicking noise is heard on a front-wheel drive vehicle while turning a corner at very low speeds. Technician A says that a worn outboard CV-joint could be the cause. Technician B says that the noise could be coming from a worn inboard CV-joint. Who is right?

- A. Technician A
- B. Technician B
- C. Both Technicians
- D. Neither A nor B



The correct answer is A. If a clicking or snapping noise is heard when accelerating or turning a corner, suspect a worn outboard CV-joint. Outboard joints wear more quickly because they operate at more extreme angles. An inboard CV-joint flexes during suspension movement, not turning.

DID YOU KNOW?

17% of repair shops only buy brand name tools—and

70% prefer to buy them.

SOURCE: Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association